

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR TH

SUBJ: THAI DECISIONS ON HIGHLAND DEVELOPMENT

1. SUMMARY: THE THAI BUREAUCRACY HAS MADE TWO DECISIONS RECENTLY THAT INDICATE THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO GO AHEAD WITH HILLTRIBE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN NORTHERN THAILAND. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE IN PART AIMED AT THE EVENTUAL ELIMINATION OF OPIUM CULTIVATION. THE DECISIONS SHOULD HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE UNPDAC CROP SUBSTITUTION PROJECT. END SUMMARY

1. IAN WILLIAMS, PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF UNPDAC IN THAILAND, NOTIFIED THE EMBASSY ON JANUARY 27 THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED A COPY OF THE MINUTES OF A JANUARY 20 MEETING AT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE CONCERNING THAI GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS IN THE HILLS OF NORTHERN THAILAND. ACCORDING TO WILLIAMS, THE MINUTES, WHICH HAVE NOT YET BEEN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH, REPORT THAT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE DECIDED THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR HILLTRIBE PROGRAMS SHOULD REMAIN WITH THE HILLTRIBES DIVISION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE, PART OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. (COMMENT: THE ROYAL FORESTRY DEPARTMENT AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE HAVE BEEN CARRYING ON A RUNNING FEUD WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE OVER RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HILLS OF NORTHERN THAILAND. APPARENTLY, THE FORESTRY

DEPARTMENT CAME CLOSE TO TAKING OVER THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HILLTRIBE DIVISION LAST MONTH. THE DECISION JUST MADE LEAVES THE HILLTRIBE DIVISION IN CONTROL AND MAY REMOVE SOME OF THE TENSIONS BETWEEN THE COMPETING BUREAUCRACIES. FROM TH POINT OF VIEW OF THE UNPDAC THE DECISION IS HELPFUL BECAUSE THE TWO DEPARTMENTS APPEAR TO AGREE ON BASIC PROGRAMS FOR THE HIGHLANDS. END COMMENT.) THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE MEETING ALSO CONCLUDED THAT "TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT" ACTIVITIES IN THE HIGHLANDS WOULD REMAIN WITH THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE. THIS WOULD COVER BASIC RESEARCH INTO SUBSTITUTE CROPS.

2. THE SECOND DECISION WAS TO GO AHEAD WITH THE PREVIOUSLY STALLED HIGHLAND RESEARCH STATION AND WITH A MODIFIED VERSION OF THE EARLIER "ZONAL DEVELOPMENT" PLAN, TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN TWO PILOT AREAS. THE THAI VERSION OF USOM'S ZONAL DEVELOPMENT IS CONSIDERABLY DIFFERENT FROM THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL. (COMMENT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DECISION TO GO AHEAD IS THAT IT SHOWS THE THAI ARE SERIOUS ABOUT MOVING FORWARD WITH NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WHICH WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON REDUCING THE CULTIVATION OF POPPY.)

3. AFTER WE RECEIVE A COPY OF THE MEETING MINUTES AND HAVE THE DOCUMENT TRANSLATED, WE WILL PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS AND COMMENTS.
WHITEHOUSE

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